

This is Erin Dunn of the Fortuna Chamber of Commerce with a Community Comment.

Fortuna is in the midst of playing host to a group of young professionals from France. They are part of a Rotary program called Group Study Exchange, a program designed for non-Rotarians in the start of their careers. They are accompanied by a Rotarian Leader. It's a vocational exchange of sorts—we sent a team to their district in France a few months ago and now they are visiting us.

The group arrived in Humboldt County Sunday evening and are staying in our homes, visiting our businesses, attending meetings and essentially, sharing their lives with us. So far, so good.

There are six all together in the team and they are adorable! Their English is better than any of our French, and they delight in sharing their humor and insights.

While they are in our charge, the team will tour Eel River Brewing Company in Scotia, the recycling center in Fortuna and attend a cattle auction at the Fortuna Auction yard.

The Team leader spoke to the Fortuna Chamber on Monday and shared his observations about the differences between the French and the Americans. Of course they are strictly his observations.

Some of the differences really resonated with the crowd. He said the French have a tendency to say “no” right away when asked anything. Then they might relent and will say “yes, but...” while Americans are dedicated to the group and to making things happen...a can-do attitude abounds. We say how, and when, while the French tend to say “Who and What” in a more defensive outlook.

He also acknowledged our sense of patriotism and support of each other.

The French he said, have a sense of individuality, whereas the Americans are often doing things for other people and don't make time to take care of ourselves. I can live with that.

Someone asked today why if the Group Study Exchange is sponsored by Rotary, why are the team members non-Rotarians.

Such a great question. The answer is kinda sappy but it's the truth. The idea behind GSE is to build peace and understanding around the world. There are four-week vocational exchanges like this happening between Rotary Districts world wide. If we send young people to another country to learn their culture then they are going to come home and share their message with their communities.

And there's something to hearing about a program from someone not directly involved in the program that gives it extra weight.

In fact, Rotary is so dedicated to making this a non-political appointment that even if you have FAMILY that are Rotarians you are not eligible. That certainly keeps it fair to all concerned.

They leave Fortuna Thursday morning and will be staying a few days in Eureka and Arcata.

If you have the chance to meet one of these team members, you are in for a treat.

After the privilege of hosting one of the team members, all I can say is Viva la France.

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